

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5
Bethany Orange Woodbridge
25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525



Dr. Jennifer P. Byars
Superintendent of Schools

jennifer.byars@amityregion5.org
203.392.2106

Superintendent's Report – January 2019

Continuously improve instruction, cultivate creativity, and enhance student engagement and performance.

Enhance the efficient and effective use of resources.

Foster a supportive climate for students and adults.

Instruction

- **SSLP/SIP Parent Presentation:** On Tuesday, January 8th, Lynn Cocco, the College and Career Counselor, presented the expectations and guidelines of the 2019 Senior Service Learning Program (generally referred to as the Senior Internship or SSLP) and the pilot-Senior Interest Project. About 200 interested parents and students attended the presentation.
- **Feedback to Students and Parents on ARHS Learning Expectations:** Beginning as a pilot this year, parents and students are able to view progress and feedback on the Amity Regional High School Learning Expectations (academic, social and civic) through Unified Classroom. The high school will also be piloting a “blended” report card for the 2nd marking period, where feedback will be given for each of the 6 academic expectations along with the social and civic expectations.
- **January PTSO:** The January PTSO Meeting included two special presentations: the anticipated “blended” report card, which will offer feedback on the ARHS Learning Expectations, and a presentation on the dangers of “vaping” from representatives from the Yale University, School of Medicine - Tobacco Research in Youth Group. This presentation was open to parents throughout the district.
- **Amity Transition Academy:** Parents of students scheduled to begin at the Amity Transition Academy in August 2019 toured the program and were very happy and excited about next year.
- **Cookie Sale:** The transition program at the high school recently held a cookie sale of student made Christmas cookies.
- **AMSO Students Participate in the Geography Bee:** Students in both grades 7 and 8 completed the classroom level rounds of this nation-wide competition. The school-wide finals will take place on January 15th. The winner will move on to the state level competition.
- **STAR Assessments:** STAR assessments in Reading and Mathematics were given on January 9th and 10th at AMSO. Results of the assessment will be analyzed by teachers and administration to help inform instructional decisions moving forward.
- **Southern Regional Music Festival:** 19 AMSB student musicians auditioned on December 1st for the Southern Regional Middle School Music Festival and 13 students qualified for band, choir, or strings.

Students competed with other music students from the southern region of the state including New Haven, Hamden, Clinton, Madison, Branford, Cheshire and other towns. These 13 student musicians will perform at North Branford Intermediate School on March 1 and March 2, 2019. Amity Middle School Band teachers, Rob Fragione and Kristen Morace, are the Jazz Band Co-Chairs of the Southern Regional Festival.

- **Winter Concert:** AMSB had an extraordinary evening Winter Concert on Thursday, December 6th, of outstanding quality. Students enjoyed the same concert that morning in an assembly.
- **Curriculum Articulation Meetings:** December and January meetings included District Technology, District Wellness, District Response to Intervention/Scientific Research-Based Instruction (RTI/SRBI), Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC), Math and ELA.
- **District Steering Committee:** The committee reviewed new textbook proposals for Chemistry and U.S. History/Modern American History for possible adoption and budget planning. The five-year textbook forecast was also shared with the group.
- **January 18th Minimum Professional Learning Day for Teachers and School Staff:** ARHS will focus their attention on continued NEASC planning. Both middle schools will engage in planned activities for advisory, 1:1 training, and professional focus planning for teacher evaluation.

Resources

- **Proposal for a Doctoral Study at ARHS:**
 - Topic of the Study: Problem-based learning and its impact on students' 21st century skills of problem solving and critical thinking.
 - Benefit to District: Findings can help guide professional learning and pedagogical practices for teachers in the area of problem solving and critical thinking. This is particularly relevant to the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards.
 - Cost to District: Time needed by teachers and students to complete the surveys.
 - Participants: Science teachers & students (both voluntary; parents must provide permission for students to participate).
 - Additional Considerations: Request for generalized (not linked to students or teachers) Star Math data; the school, teachers, and students will not be identified in the dissertation.
- **Proposal for a Research Study at ARHS:**
 - Topic of the Study: Focus group activity for student feedback to develop a game/app aimed at improving school climate based on student feedback.
 - Benefit to District: Access and use of the game/app once it is developed; data from the game/app can inform administrators, teachers, and students how to improve school climate.
 - Cost to District: Time needed by students to participate in the focus group.
 - Participants: Broad spectrum of students; this was initiated by the Diversity Club (currently structured as an opt-out parent permission).
 - Additional Considerations: None at this time.
- **Special Education Panel:** Mary Raiola served on an Administrator Panel for special education students at SCSU.
- **BOWA Curriculum Directors Meeting:** Directors met on January 4, 2019. Topics of discussion included Math and World Language placements for entering seventh graders, an update on Amity's plan for Anti-Semitism and Racism awareness, and shared Professional Development in certain curriculum areas for 2019-2020.

- **New Flooring in the Weight Room:** New flooring was installed in the AMSO weight room. The rubberized flooring is a significant enhancement to student safety and will enable the PE teachers to expand their units on personal training.

Climate

- **Advisory Launch at Amity Middle School Orange:** Student advisory groups met for the first time on January 7th. The purpose of the advisory program is to strengthen systems that students need to develop academically, socially and emotionally. The entire day was seen as an investment in building a stronger school community and uniting students around a common theme, “I am part of my school community.” Working with Dr. Monte Selby, a Grammy-award winning songwriter, every student came together and spent a portion of the day contributing ideas to help write a song that will serve as the theme for our advisory.
- **Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL) *Step Up!* Assembly Program:** On Friday, January 4th, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) presented their *Step Up!* program to all AMSB seventh and eighth grade students. This program, coordinated by our Climate Committee and done several times in past years, is designed to give a voice to the targets of bullying and bias; build empathy in the perpetrators; and, inspire and empower bystanders to become allies against prejudice and bullying. We encouraged parents and guardians to talk to their children about their *Step Up!* experience and emailed parents the ADL link for free online resources on bias and bullying for parents, families, and caregivers, which may assist them and their child in further exploring these topics.
- **Successful Food/Gift/Clothing Drives:** Throughout the months of November and December, many classes, clubs and faculty organized various collections to benefit local schools, shelters and organizations. Students in history classes, health classes, and honors societies donated gifts, food and clothing. Adults also contributed through the PTSO gift donation drive and the AEA Holiday Bear Project.
- **Cocoa and Cram:** Wednesday, January 16th will be the annual Link Crew Cocoa and Cram event for ninth graders. This is an opportunity for freshmen to work with link leaders and each other to prepare for midterm exams. Refreshments will be served. Students are asked to bring their review sheets and study materials. They will leave feeling confident and prepared for their first midterm exams!
- **Service Dog Visits Transition Classes:** Service dog, Graham, and his owner, Robin, continue to visit the 2 transition classes at the high school as well as the VOCAL program at AMSO. They participate in a variety of activities, including the students reading to Graham.
- **Hope for Heroes:** AMSO Students collected over 1,500 items and made over 54 gift bags to be donated to the West Haven Veterans Hospital. Students also created handmade scarves and hats for over 54 veterans. Our thanks to the parents and families for their generosity and support of this activity.
- **AMSB Climate Committee:** The committee had its monthly meeting on December 11th with the largest attendance ever, thirty-three people present. The purpose of the AMSB Climate Committee is to provide stakeholders in the school with an opportunity to discuss current trends and issues within the school community as well as implement programs and strategies to help improve the climate for all. Thayer Doyle, chairperson, facilitated the discussion that included a review of the “Be Amity” positive behavioral intervention strategy; the progress of the Advisory program implementation; and data on discipline. A local artist and parents of students in both AMSB and ARHS shared a proposal for a district-wide art project.

- **Snowflake Dance:** The PTSO sponsored a Snowflake Dance for AMSB students on Friday, December 14th. This was a free event, and 126 students attended.
- **Holiday for Giving Toy Collection:** The AMSB Student Council and Leo Clubs ran a combined toy drive, “Holiday for Giving,” from November 26th through December 7th. Toys were collected for children ages 2-12, and all toys went to kids in our area.
- **Pajama Day:** Friday, December 14th, was Pajama Day at AMSB; and money was raised for the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center for children suffering from cancer. Students who contributed a dollar for the fundraiser were permitted to wear pajamas in school.
- **Holocaust Curriculum Review:** The Department Chairs, along with the Content Leaders for ELA and Social Studies, will meet with consultants from the Anti-Defamation League to review curriculum related to teaching the Holocaust and genocide. This is an action step in the plan to address anti-Semitism and intolerance and meets new State requirements for all public school districts.



Jennifer P. Byars, Ed.D.

This report is a synopsis of many of the undertakings, efforts, and achievements toward our District Goals and Objectives. It does not represent a complete and comprehensive account of all that has happened in the past month. I would encourage you to contact me directly if you have questions about items that you read or that you anticipated reading. I would be glad to discuss them.